

IF THIS MAN JONAS CAN MAKE  
THE GRADE, WHY CAN'T I?  
C. C. Robinson

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# If This Man Jonas Can Make the Grade, Why Can't I?

By C. C. Robinson

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**J**ULIUS JONAS lost his sight and a fine job with a big income when he was forty-eight. Today, a year or two past sixty, I would rate Julius Jonas as one of the few truly successful men I know.

Within a week after the accident that deprived him of his sight, he was at work building a new career. Building a new career! Such an easy, thoroughly American thing to say, but I wonder how many of us can understand even a little of what starting over meant to this man who did it?

I am writing this in a room I have used almost continuously for the past five years. A few moments ago, I said to myself: "Robinson, you're blind. You've lost your job. But you've got to eat, and you've got to do something for your family, too. All right, what *are* you going to do?"

Then I closed my eyes and, just to get the feel of the thing, I started across the room. Less than five steps away from the desk, my trip came to grief against a filing cabinet I'd have sworn was directly behind me!

## TAKES MORE THAN PRACTICE

"Well," I told myself, "that's nothing. You're just not used to finding your way around in the dark. It's all a matter of practice. Better have a smoke and just *think* about what you're going to work out."

I burned one of my fingers striking the match and scorched half the paper off the cigarette trying to get a light. I lit another with my eyes open, then settled back, in the dark once more, to commence my thinking. Somehow, I couldn't taste the smoke.

And that was as far as I went in trying to stand where Jonas stood. I was ready to quit before I'd even begun. But I guess he was made of more durable stuff.

He studied the Braille method of reading and writing and hung on for nearly two years, out here in the middle-west, trying to find something worth while to do. Then he went to New York.

"Do you wish to learn to make brooms or mops?" they asked him at



JULIUS JONAS  
*New York Life, New York City*

a big institute for the blind. Would you, a successful salesman, get a kick out of spending the rest of your days making brooms or mops?

Finally, he went to the New York Life. They were interested and said they'd give him a chance, but as he was led out of the office a clerk was heard to say: "Poor blind guy! What chance has he got when it's so hard for people who can see?"

I don't know what Julius Jonas expected to do, but I do know something about what he has done:

In nine different years, he has qualified for the New York Life's "Two Hundred Thousand Club"—and once he made the "Top Club" (\$400,000 or more).

The blind institutions had nothing that would help him learn the life insurance business; no books in Braille on salesmanship, insurance or even general business. The lack of a rate book in Braille was a particularly tough handicap. He was told by the blind societies that they had no money for such a book.

So Jones got a Braille typewriter and made up his own rate book. "That experience," he says, "got me started trying to do something to

smooth the paths of other sightless men and women who might, as I had done, aspire to a career in life insurance."

That "something" which Jonas made up his mind to do has continued and grown, over the years, until today the rate books of 32 companies, including his own New York Life, are printed in Braille and more than 200 sightless men and women have taken their well-earned places among the life underwriters of this country.

J. Robert Atkinson, of the Braille Institute of America has cooperated actively for several years. Now, the House of Protection (Lovelace), Digest of Insurance (Butzel), Sensible Selling (Coffin-Engelsman) and Insurance (Ackerman) have been published in Braille and are available in 21 lending libraries throughout the country.

## COURSE IN SALESMANSHIP

With the cooperation of President Buckner of the New York Life, a complete course in salesmanship was printed in Braille and sent to public libraries. Jonas induced the Hadley Correspondence School for the Blind to accept this course as part of its curriculum and today it is more in demand than any other course. The government thought enough of his idea to grant "franking privileges"; that is, when a student has finished with a book, he may return it to the school postage free. And the same help is extended to the school in sending the books out to pupils.

Graduates of this course are referred to Mr. Jonas who in turn directs them to the nearest agency of a company equipped with Braille rate books.

"I think you're doing a wonderful work," I told Mr. Jonas, "and of course your production would be welcomed in the agency department of any company in the country. But what about all these other sightless men and women, Are they making the grade?"

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## THIS MAN JONAS

*(Continued from page 9)*

"I know five of them who earned a combined income of better than \$55,000 in one year, not long ago," he replied. "And Mr. Buckner tells me that the percentage of successes among sightless agents is considerably higher than it is among those with normal sight."

This man spends, on the average, at least three months out of the year in his work for the business advancement of sightless people, yet he doesn't take a penny for this time.

"How can you afford it?" I asked him.

"Well," he told me, "I feel a good deal like the philosopher who once said 'If I am not for myself, who will be? If I am only for myself, what am I?' To tell you the truth," he went on, "I don't think any of us are really working just for money. It seems to me that we work in order to accomplish things which we deeply want to do. I am well paid, in both money and satisfaction, for selling life insurance—but I am *better* paid for helping men, a little, along the road I had to travel alone."

As I said in the beginning, Julius Jonas is one of the few truly successful men I know.

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